



Maintenance being performed on the back-up power system at a microwave communications site in Southwest Montana last Dec., 2011. (Photo by Tom Dunne)

Statewide Interoperability Governing Board Meeting Report

Montana's new Statewide Interoperability Governing Board (SIGB) held its second meeting on Tues., Dec. 13, 2011 in Helena. Warren Dupuis, the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), presented an information brief on the 2007 Public Safety Interoperability Communications (PSIC) grant. He explained that because of numerous changes in site selection and funding sources for the Northeast (NE) Billings site in Yellowstone County, requirements for the Environmental and Historical Protection (EHP) application for the site had not been met or approved by the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS) grants office. Given that the EHP process can be lengthy, it is doubtful that approval could be secured before the PSIC grant expires.

The NE Billings site is a critical component of the statewide microwave backbone. It also has a huge impact on communications in Yellowstone County and the City of Billings. So, a mitigation strategy was proposed and adopted to modify Yellowstone County's grant award to separate planning activities, such as the EHP application, soil samples and bid documents, from actual build-out activities. These two distinct functions are proposed to be funded from two different grant sources. This model, which uses planning dollars up front, provides a better opportunity to predict success based on the project scope, timing and funding.

The plan is to complete PSIC Investment Justifications (IJ) 1 and 2 without completing the NE

Billings site so the grant may be closed out in time. Yellowstone County was thanked for taking on the re-obligation of this grant, and the importance of this project was emphasized.

Tom Butler and Gordon Booth, Montana Highway Patrol, gave a brief presentation on an interactive map of the statewide public safety communications network. They illustrated coverage maps and showed the status of trunking and microwave across the state. The program also will store inventory details, which is not only important for grant compliance, but also a useful management tool when considering future capitalization. Members of the SIGB were asked for input on other data fields that might be useful, since it is much easier to include them at the beginning of the mapping project rather than after adding them after the fact.

Quinn Ness, Public Safety Services Bureau Chief, provided some history on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) narrowband ruling and upcoming deadline, and he gave an overview of a proposed funding allocation for narrowbanding equipment from DHS grant dollars. The SIGB passed a motion to recommend that DES move forward on the narrowbanding equipment allocation.

Carl Hotvedt, State Information Technology Services Division (SITSD), reviewed the proposal for the SIGB to establish a Technical Working Group. This group will be responsible for making and evaluating technical and operational recommendations that will support the development and operation of a statewide public safety communications system for use by local, state, tribal and federal public safety responders. He outlined some of the group's initial objectives as follows:

- Develop a technical support resource list.
- Develop recommended spare parts list and staging locations.
- Develop operational processes and procedures, as follows:
 - Preventative maintenance plan.
 - Trouble call response and escalation plan.
 - Change management.
- Develop and recommend equipment and utilization procedures.
- Develop technical and user training materials and resources.

HEARD ACROSS MONTANA

A membership structure for the Technical Working Group was proposed, and board members made additional suggestions to assure a broad representation of public safety jurisdictions and disciplines.

Warren led a discussion on recommendations for a legislative working group that would codify the roles, responsibilities and authority of the SIGB; secure funding for the long-term operation and maintenance of the public safety communications system; and secure funding for planning and grant match requirements to continue system build out. Members discussed recommendations for membership, and Warren will provide suggestions at the Jan. meeting.

Roger Smith, Lewis and Clark County, gave an update on a variety of technical activities and accomplishments for the month.

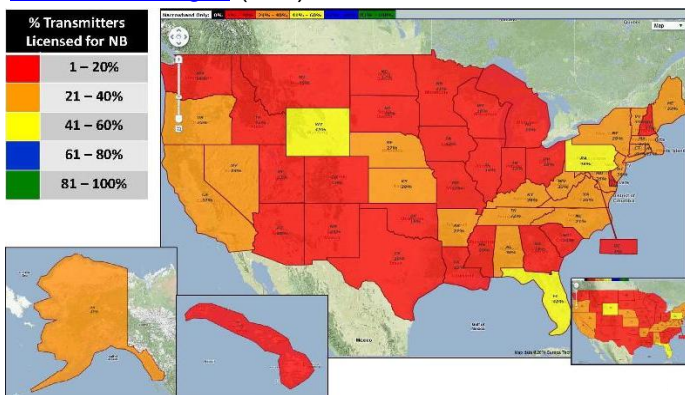
The next SIGB meeting will be Tues., Jan. 10 from 10:00 am to noon at the State Capitol in Helena.

Narrowbanding Update: It's Time to Turn this Map GREEN

Adapted with permission from NPSTC at <http://www.npstc.org/narrowbanding.jsp>

The deadline for compliance with the FCC's narrowbanding mandate is less than a year away. According to the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council (NPSTC), only three states in the entire U.S. have between 41% and 60% of their transmitters licensed to operate narrowband (12.5 kHz) only (see map below). The majority of states have fewer than 20% of their transmitters licensed for narrowband.

The State of Montana's Public Safety Services Bureau (PSSB) can assist public safety licensees with conversion of their FCC license to cover narrowband requirements, free of charge. For more information, please contact Julia Noland at jnoland@mt.gov (406) 444-0162 or Scott Bradford at sbradford@mt.gov (406) 444-2782.



News on a Proposed Extension of the Narrowband Deadline

Jan. 1, 2013 Deadline has NOT Changed

Last Nov., Rep. Steve Rothman (D-NJ) offered a bill (HR 3430) to delay implementation of the FCC's narrowbanding mandate affecting spectrum in the VHF and UHF bands. As of this date, the legislation has no co-sponsors nor has it received support from many in the public safety communications community. **Please note that this legislation has only been introduced, and Congress has taken no action on it.**

According to APCO International, few in Washington expect the bill to be given serious consideration. Since it has little chance of becoming law, it would be a mistake for any licensee to delay narrowbanding efforts based on introduction of the Rothman bill. Up-to-date information on the bill may be obtained at <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d112:HR03430:@@L&summ2=m&>.

Licensees should move forward with narrowbanding to meet the deadline of Jan. 1, 2013. Licensees who need more time can seek a waiver with proper documentation as per the [FCC's Public Notice DA 11-1189](#).

For more information, please visit APCO-AFC's [narrowbanding website](#).

Upcoming Meetings

• Mon.-Thurs., Jan. 9-12: Communications Unit Leader (COML) Training

[Link to Course Description](#)

Fort Harrison • 8:00 am - 5:00 pm daily

Armed Forces Reserve Center

Regional Training Institute (RTI) Rm. 12; Contact:

Michael Stapp, mstapp@mt.gov or 406-324-4786

• Tues., Jan. 10, 2012: Statewide Interoperability Governing Board (SIGB)

Helena • 10:00 am - noon

State Capitol, Room 137

http://itsd.mt.gov/policy/councils/sigb/01102012_meeting.mcp

• Tues., Jan. 24, 2012: State Agency Radio Users Task Force

Helena • 3:00 - 4:30 pm

Mitchell Building, 125 N. Roberts, Rm. 160

• Mon.-Thurs., Feb. 13-17: Communications Technician (COMT) Training

[Link to Course Description](#)

Fort Harrison • 8:00 am - 5:00 pm daily

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